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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3781
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 001076

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR CA/OCS/ACS/AF T. Mason AND AF/S B. WALCH

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [CASC](#) [ASEC](#) [AMED](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: Proposed Zimbabwe Travel Alert - Cholera

REF: HARARE 001054

THIS IS AN ACTION REQUEST. SEE PROPOSED TEXT BELOW.

SUMMARY

¶1. Post recommends a Travel Alert be issued for Zimbabwe, warning American citizens of cholera, inadequate potable water, and a collapsed medical infrastructure. The latest outbreak of cholera, which started in August 2008, has overwhelmed medical resources in country, exposed a critical potable water shortage, and threatens to infect more than 60,000 persons in the next six months. Below is our proposed text. END SUMMARY.

Proposed Travel Alert Text

¶2. The Department of State warns U.S. citizens of a cholera outbreak in Zimbabwe and advises U.S. citizens visiting Zimbabwe to use appropriate precautions. Cholera is a potentially fatal bacterial infection of the intestine that causes severe diarrhea and dehydration. The disease is spread through untreated sewage and contaminated drinking water. The latest outbreak in Zimbabwe has exposed a shortage of potable water throughout the country and overwhelmed medical resources. Travelers to Zimbabwe should drink boiled or bottled water, use boiled or bottled water in food preparation, and regularly wash their hands with a sanitizer. This Travel Alert expires April 30, 2009.

¶3. Cholera outbreaks initially erupted in two Harare-area locations, but quickly spread to Beitbridge, the border post with South Africa. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (<http://ochaonline.un.org>) now reports of cholera outbreaks in all provinces of Zimbabwe, with over 11,000 cases and 500 deaths. Health officials predict up to 60,000 people are in danger of infection within the next six months.

¶4. Although the humanitarian community is responding with water, sanitation, and hygiene initiatives in outbreak areas, the outbreak has exposed a critical shortage of potable water and medical resources, leading to uncommonly high case-fatality rates. Harare's steep decline in water and sewage infrastructure has fueled the spread of the disease. Due to corroded water and sewage lines, many sections of the city are without running water or sewage disposal. Health officials have declared the city's water supply to be unsafe and warn of conditions worsening during the coming rainy season, typically mid-November through the end of March. Rains generally increase the incidence of diarrheal disease and threaten to contaminate wells with sewage runoff.

¶5. Hampering control efforts is the collapse of the Zimbabwe health system. Harare's three public hospitals have virtually shut down. Private clinics, while operational, are often lacking in staff, electricity, water, and medical supplies. As a result, there is no guarantee that adequate emergency medical treatment will be

obtainable for travelers who become ill.

¶16. For additional information on cholera, American citizens may refer to the CDC's website at http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/dfbmd/disease_listing/cholera_gi.html. American citizens experiencing symptoms associated with cholera, such as severe diarrhea, should seek immediate medical attention.

¶17. For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at <http://travel.state.gov> where the current Worldwide Caution, Travel Warnings, and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States and Canada or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Americans are also encouraged to read the Country Specific Information for Zimbabwe, available on the Embassy's website at <http://harare.usembassy.gov>, and also at <http://travel.state.gov>.

¶18. U.S. citizens living or traveling abroad are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site at <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/> so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security. Americans without internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. For additional information, please refer to "A Safe Trip Abroad" found at <http://travel.state.gov>.

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¶19. U.S. citizens may contact the American Citizens Services Unit of the U.S. Embassy in Harare for further information. The Embassy is located on 172 Herbert Chitepo Avenue, Harare. Telephone 263-4-250-593/4/5, e-mail consularharare@state.gov. The Embassy's Internet home page address is <http://harare.usembassy.gov>.

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